



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK ARTS & HERITAGE PROGRAM

FIELDNOTES

Accession Numbers:

MH-06-07-FNMH-06-07-DMH-06-07-DI

Fieldnotes

Audio recordings

Photographic documentation

Additional materials

Date(s): April 19, 2006Related Accession Numbers: MH-01-02Individual/Group/Event: Site visit to Apprenticeship between Ksenia Pokrovsky and Faith RiccioFieldworker(s): Maggie HoltzbergLocation of Interview: Third floor studio in Pokrovsky homeStreet Address: [REDACTED]City: [REDACTED]Zip: [REDACTED]Co: [REDACTED]Contact person (if different from above): Ksenia PokrovskyTitle: [REDACTED]Sponsoring organization (for event or group): [REDACTED]Address (if different from above): [REDACTED]Phone: Daytime: [REDACTED]Evening: [REDACTED]E-mail: izogrph@izograph.comWebsite: www.izograph.comSpecial Needs (including translation): Ksenia's English is somewhat limited and spoken with Russian accent

Traditions documented on visit (traditional art/skills, occupational experience, ethnic or religious community):

Apprenticeship including practice drawings, samples of Faith Riccio's icons in process, daughter Anna's murals, and granddaughter Ksenia's icons.

Summary: Ksenia Pokrovsky lives on a residential street just outside of the center of Sharon, MA. It is a decidedly Jewish neighborhood, with six synagogues located within walking distance. Maggie (who had first visited in 2001) arrived at 10:00 and was greeted at the door by Ksenia Pokrovsky. She led the way to the top floor of the house where Ksenia has her studio. The studio is full of students' icons, in various stages of completion. Already at work was apprenticing Sister Faith Riccio, who gave me a welcoming hug. Ksenia basically left the two of us to do the better part of the interview. I suspect she is

uncomfortable with her English – or rather, in explaining the mysteries of iconography in other than her native Russian.

Faith showed me her work, which included a number of icons she has nearly completed. She also pulled out a number of transparencies on which she had traced icon faces as a way of practicing. She was currently working on an icon of Jesus washing the disciples' feet – having individually drawn the disciples and now working on getting just the right position on board.

Eventually, Ksenia joined us – and did answer some questions on tape. Her daughter Anna came in, as did her daughter, also named Ksenia. This youngest of three generations of female iconographers had started drawing icons at age 4 and seems to be a natural. Ksenia's daughter Anna is also an accomplished iconographer. The second floor of the house, where Anna lives, was completely taken over by individual pieces of a mural, which she has been commissioned to complete for a church in Lexington, Kentucky. We briefly stepped into a room at the front of the house – curtains drawn, yet filtering in light, inviting. All the walls are lined with scholarly books save for one, which holds a built-in chaise with a textile covering. I ask about this room. "It is the library. It was my son's library." I am aware that her son, who I had met briefly in 2001, has died. He had been sick with cancer. "What was his field of study?" I ask. "Religion. Religious studies." These are serious books – the room feels like a living memorial to a son who held much promise.

After about two hours, Ksenia offered us tea or coffee and we walked to the kitchen – a large room at the back of the house. There were five or six parakeets that had run of the place – perched on either side of the room, and occasionally flying across at alarmingly low levels. Four unhatched eggs were being kept warm in "houses" with lightbulbs for heat. On the table was an assortment of cheeses – St. Andre, cheddar and goat cheese – and saltines. Another student of Ksenia's – Paul from Salem- was also visiting. They all seemed to have a convivial, teasing yet respectful manner with each other.

Sister Faith spends a significant amount of time in the household – coming weekly for several days at a time to work under Ksenia's guidance. Ksenia considers Faith to be one of her best students (and she has had many), remarking how hard Faith works. "She has the time to devote to this."

As I leave, Faith notes how energetic I am – twice in one week?!